V. *Mr.* Zachary Mayne's *Letter*, 1694. *Concerning a Spout of Water that happened at* Topſham *on the River between the Sea and* Exeter.

SIR,

I Received yours, and ſhould have given my ſelf much ſooner the Satisfaction of Anſwering it, had I not met with hindrances; I have taken pains to get the beſt Information that I could, and hope I have with ſome difficulty pickt out a little Truth out of a vaſt heap of Falſhoods. My Informants are Perſons uſing the Seas, and are well acquainted with (Accidents ſhall I call them, or rather) Prodigies of this Nature, which are very frequent abroad, though rarely, I think 'tis ſaid never ſeen before with us in our River, though ſome pretend to have ſeen of them in the *Downs*. The *French* call theſe ſorts of Appearances *Trombs*, I ſuppoſe from the Figure and the Noiſe that they make, that word ſignifying a ſort of Humming Top. They are certain Elevations of Water during Storms and Tempeſts, reaching from the Superficies of the Sea to the Clouds. They happen ſeveral ways, ſometimes the Water is ſeen to boyl, and raiſe it ſelf for a conſiderable ſpace round about a Foot from the Surface, above which appears, as it were, a thick and black Smoak, in the midſt of which is obſerved a ſort of Stream or Pipe reſembling a Tunnel, which ariſeth as high as the Clouds; At other times theſe Pipes or Tunnels are obſerved to come from the Clouds, and ſuck up the Water with great noiſe and violence. They move from the place where they were firſt gathered according to the motion of the Wind, and diſcharge themſelves ſometimes into the Sea, to the unavoidable

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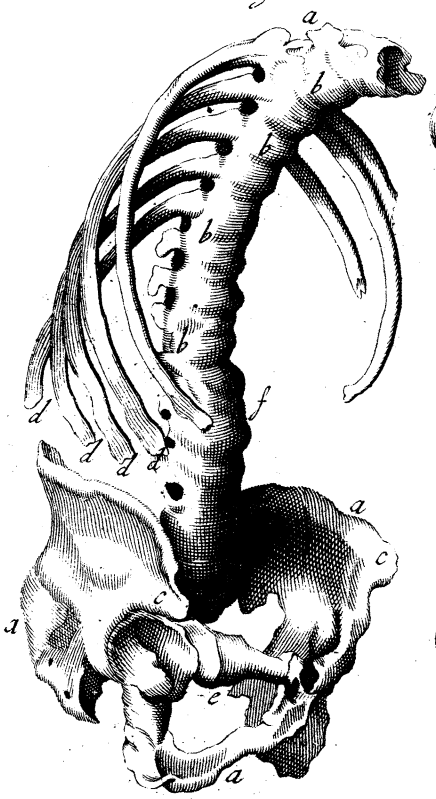
unavoidable Deſtruction of ſuch Ships as are in their way, if they be ſmall Veſſels, and to their great Damage be they never ſo big: Sometimes on the Shoar, beating down all they meet with, and raiſing the Sand and Stones to a prodigious height. 'Tis ſaid, that Veſſels that have any Force uſually fire their Guns at them loaden with a Bar of Iron, and if they be ſo happy as to ſtrike them, the Water is preſently ſeen to run out of them with a might noiſe, but no further miſchief. Ours happened *Tueſday* laſt, the *7th.* of *Auguſt*, 1694. between Nine and Ten of the Clock in the Forenoon; 'twas then very near, if not quite low Woter, which is lookt on as a ſpecial Providence, ſince had it been High Water, 'tis concluded its ſtrength would have been much greater, and its conſequences more ſad. The Water that was near it ſeemed to fly hither and thither, as though 'twould fain make its eſcape from it: Yet I cannot find upon Enquiry that the Channel was at all wholly dry. There was alſo ſome Wind, though not ſo violent as it had been before; and when the Spout or *Tromb* began to move, it went with the Wind like a dark ſmoak, and the Wind being then W. N. W. its courſe was E. S. E. I have ſent you a rude Draught of the manner of its paſſage after it began to move, according to the beſt Information I could get, for I was not at home when it happened.

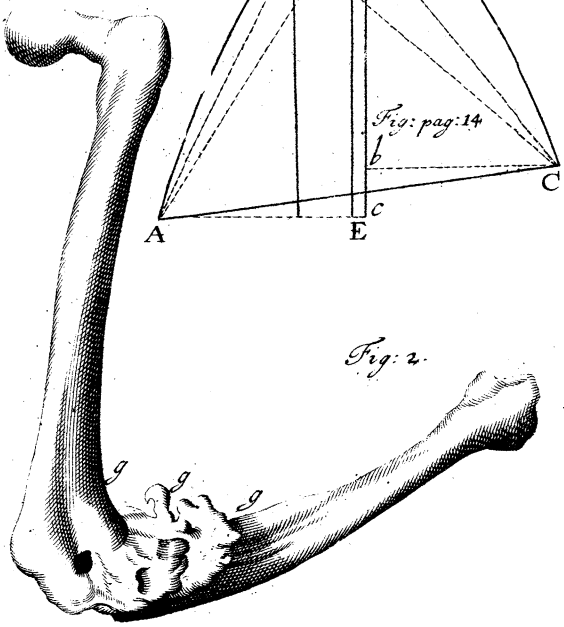
The marks + + + ſhew the River, the Letter O the Spout. The Letter S Mr. *Seaward's* Houſe (who was an Eye-witneſs of it) which it gently touched with little or no Damage, blowing only off a few Tiles. The Letter G the Houſe of one Widdow *Goldſworthy*, which it in part uncovered, took off almoſt all the Thatch of her Garden Wall, brake down a large Limb of a Plumb-Tree which ſtood at the higher end of her Garden, and which is more Remarkable than all the

reſt, it took off an Apple-Tree which was no way decay'd, and between fifteen and ſixteen Inches about, within two or three Inches from the Ground, almoſt as exactly as any Saw could have done it, and carried it, as I judge, (for I did not meaſure it) between Twenty and Thirty Foot from the place where it grew, and that not forward in the Path that it took, but almoſt directly backward, which makes me conclude that it had a double Motion; the one external from the Wind ſtrait forward, the other internal and circular, like the Fly of a Jack, which a Man may carry in his Hand, that will ſtrike any thing either forward or backward as it meets with it. G with a Bar under it ſhews you Mr. *Green*'s Houſe, which was for the moſt part untiled, and backward in the Court there was a Linny that reſted upon a Wall, which indeed it heaved a little out of its place, part of it hung on one ſide of the Wall, and part on the other; but not broken in pieces, nor much injured, it having been ſince reſtored to its proper place. The Letters W L ſhew you two Houſes more that were very much damaged in their coverings, which is the more Remarkable, for that Mr. *Moxam*'s Houſe, marked M M, though it ſtood between the Injured Houſes, and was much higher than either, had only two or three Quarries of Glaſs broken. E E E E E ſhews the march of the Spout. The Letter X the Planks that were blown ſome upright, ſome ſeveral Yards out of their place. D a Ship newly lanched, of about One Hundred Tuns, which was much ſhaken, but not hurt. K a Maſt of near a Tun weight, thrown out of its place. W the Anchor that was torn out of the Ground, and carried ſeven or eight Foot with a Boat that was faſtened to it, and blown up into the Air, that Boat was rent from the Head to the Keel. B another new Boat blown about ſix Foot high, and turned upſide down.

down. A a Fiſher Boat with one Man in it, which was near the place where the Spout was at firſt perceived, but through Mercy eſcaped. L A a Lane that goes from the River, in which ſome Houſes ſuffered Damage, which ſhews that the Spout was divided in its march. 'Tis no ſmall Mercy that no Man, Woman, or Child received the leaſt Injury in their Perſons. God ſhews us what he can do, happy we, if we underſtood his meaning, and comply with it; but alas, Mercies and Judgments are ſoon forgotten.

Fig: 1





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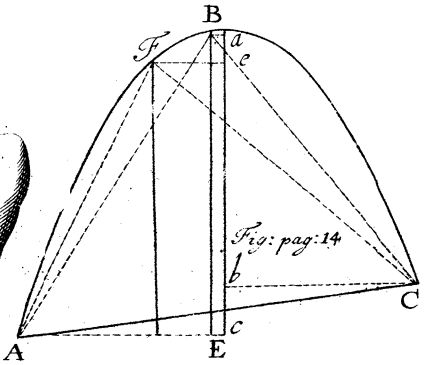

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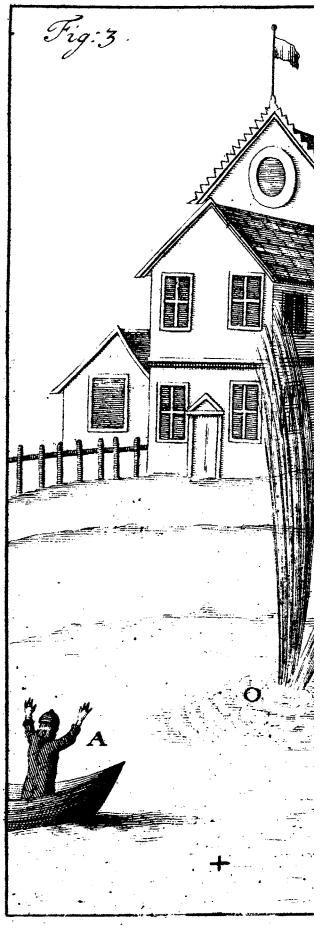

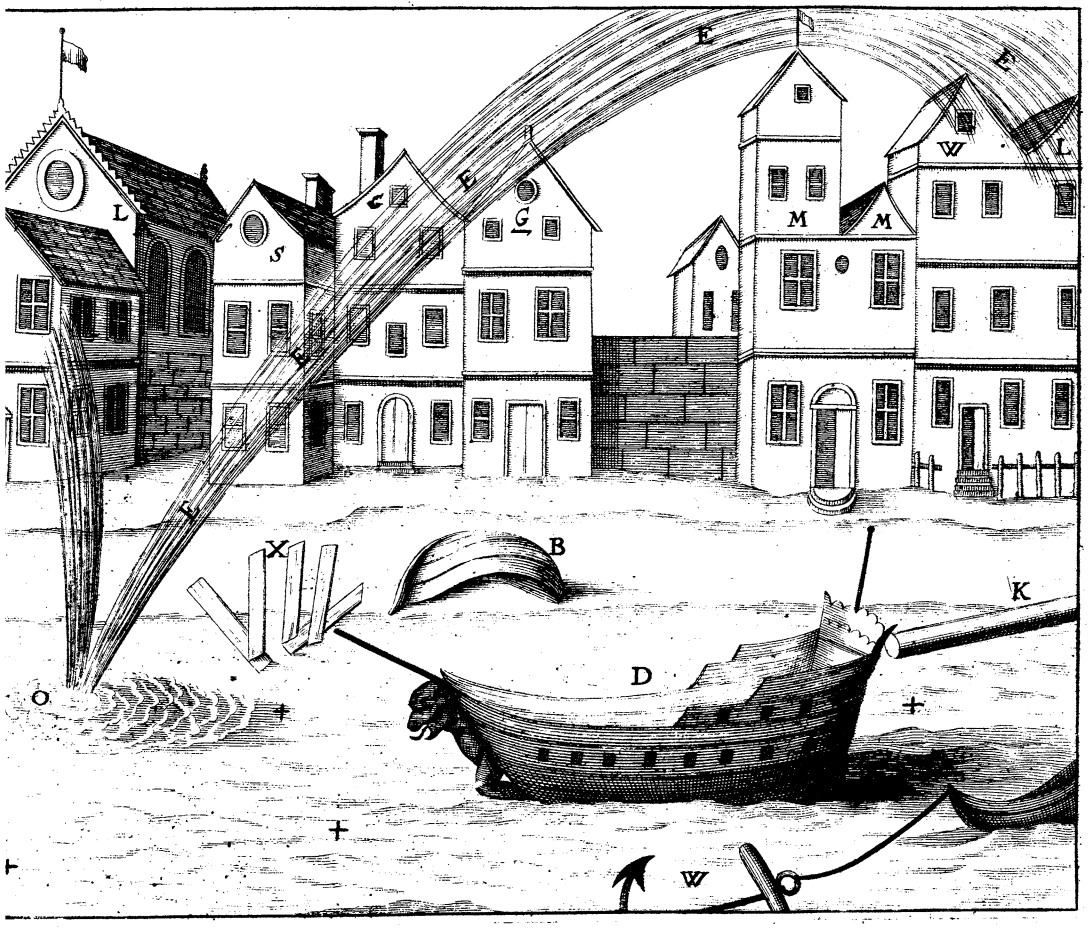
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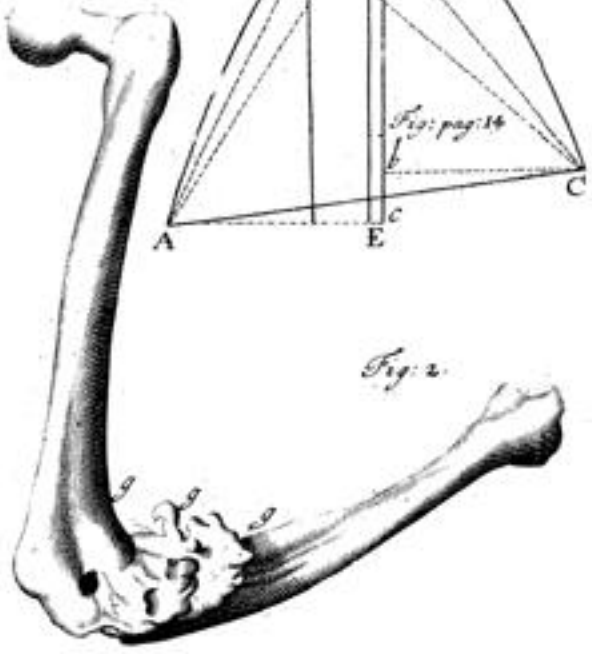
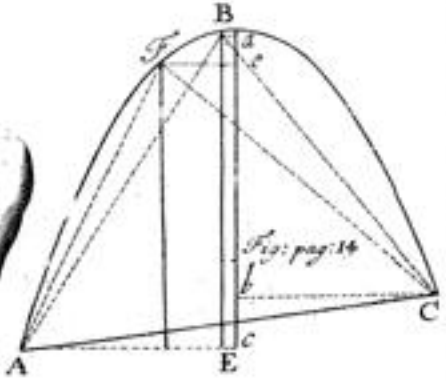
Fig: 1





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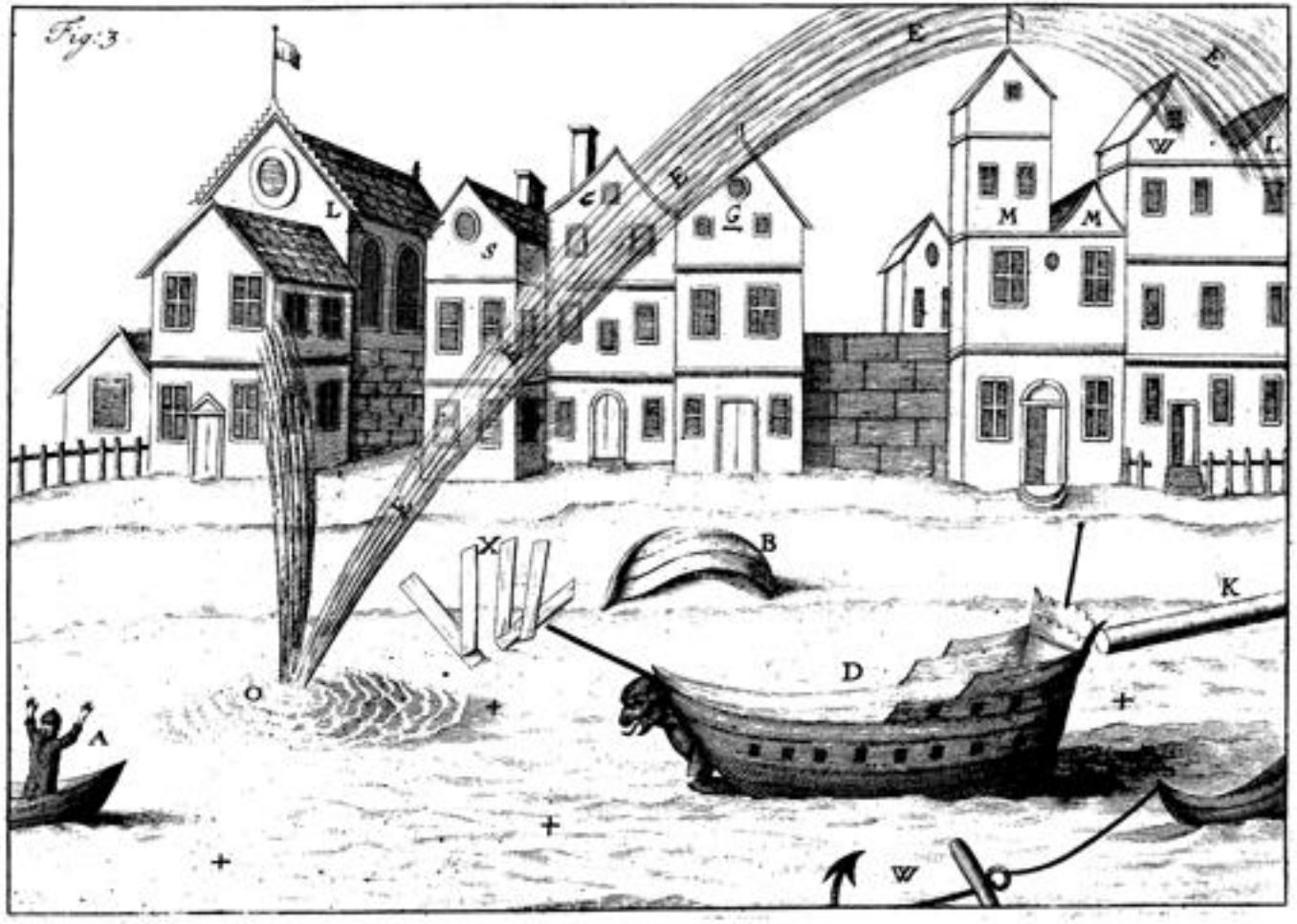
Fig: 3